

## Chapter II

### THE DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC BASE

#### INTRODUCTION

Proper planning for the growth and development of any area requires an understanding of the area's demographic and economic base. Inventories and analyses of population and economic activity are therefore essential basic studies to be conducted in preparation of a development plan. This chapter presents the findings of the socio-economic inventories and analyses conducted in support of the Waukesha County development plan. Basic demographic information, including information pertaining to the size and distribution of the resident population and to such population characteristics as age, sex, educational attainment, racial composition, marital status, and household composition, is presented in the first section of this chapter. Information pertaining to the economic base, including information regarding the size and characteristics of the labor force, employment, structure of the economy, personal income levels, and the property tax base of the County, is presented in the second section of this chapter.

The data on population and on economic activity levels and trends in Waukesha County presented in this chapter provide part of the basis for the preparation of the projections and forecasts of future population and economic activity levels for the County presented in Chapter VIII. Those projections and forecasts are in turn the basis for estimating future demands for land, housing, transportation and recreational facilities, utilities, schools, and other public facilities which the County development plan must seek to accommodate.

#### DEMOGRAPHIC BASE

##### Population Size and Growth Trends

Resident population levels for Waukesha County for the past 140 years, as enumerated in U. S. Censuses of Population, are presented in Table 1 and Figure 1. During the 100-year period from 1850 to 1950, the resident population of the County increased gradually, from 19,258 persons in 1850 to 85,901 persons in 1950. The County experienced a significant increase in the rate of population growth after 1950, increasing by 84 percent during the

1950s, 46 percent during the 1960s, 21 percent during the 1970s, and 9 percent during the 1980s. By 1990, the County population level stood at 304,715, more than three times the 1950 level. Estimates prepared by the Wisconsin Department of Administration indicate the County population increased further, to 323,387, by January 1994, an increase of about 18,670 persons, or 6 percent, over the April 1990 U. S. Census of Population and Housing count.

As shown in Table 1, the rate of population growth for Waukesha County exceeded the population growth rate of the State during each of the past eight decades and that of the seven-county Southeastern Wisconsin Region during each of the past six decades. As a result, the County's share of the State population increased from under 2 percent in 1910 to about 6 percent in 1990, and its share of the regional population increased from about 5 percent in 1930 to about 17 percent in 1990. The County's increase in proportionate share of the regional population is a reflection of the decentralization of population away from Milwaukee County, particularly over the past four decades.

Waukesha County ranked third among the 72 counties in Wisconsin in total population in 1990, behind Dane County and Milwaukee County (see Figure 2), and was among the fastest-growing counties in the State during the post World War II era. As indicated in Table 2 and Figure 3, Waukesha County had the highest relative growth in population among all Wisconsin counties during the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. Despite reduced growth rates during the 1970s and 1980s, the County's overall growth rate of 386 percent over the 50-year period from 1940 to 1990 remains the highest among the 72 counties in Wisconsin.

##### Components of Population Change

The population of an area such as Waukesha County is constantly changing with the occurrence of births and deaths and through the inflow and outflow of persons migrating from one area to another. Population increases result from births and in-migration of persons; population decreases result from deaths and out-migration. The balance between births and deaths is termed "natural